

BELMONT VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING (VIC)

Minutes, March 18, 2003

Accepted, May 15, 2003

Members present: Jenny Fallon, Matthew Hausmann, Tim Higgins, Bill Hofmann, Sarah Oaklander, Margaret O'Brien, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon, Barry Winston

Members absent: Martin Greco

7:06 p.m. Chairman, Jennifer Page, opened the meeting.

One set of minutes (1/23/03) and two sets of notes were accepted by the Committee (unanimous vote). The notes were due to a lack of a quorum at the meetings on 2/6/03 and 2/20/03. All will be posted on the website.

Meg O'Brien from the Public Information and Communications Planning Group (P.I.C.) provided an update. The group has met two times and heard from Selectman Paul Solomon concerning the directive from the Board of Selectmen. It was noted that there is not yet a representative from the School Committee, Cable Access Board and League of Women Voters. They are attempting to identify a new room to wire for cable access. Tim McCarthy from the Belmont Electric Light will wire a room, provided his men are available (rainy days). Currently, there are very few rooms in the community wired for live broadcasts.

The P.I.C. still needs to focus on broader goals as well. They are looking at the different communications types and needs within the community. The membership of the Committee was reviewed. The possibility of involving Town Meeting members as early in the process as possible was mentioned as a goal.

A general discussion ensued concerning the Town's website, the usefulness of it and ability of users to navigate it. There are still problems and not everyone is connected electronically.

Sara Oaklander provided an update on the BEDPG activities to date. Highlights include assisting Office of Community Development on the corridor study and on the permitting process changes, working on producing a market analysis in cooperation with developers and businesses, advocating for Belmont businesses and weighing in on the liquor license issue. The area being concentrated on is market research. They are now developing a work plan. A down side is a misunderstanding with the Long Range Economic Development Planning Committee. The issues are currently being worked out. Concerns are centering on communicating with other communities. There is bound to be some overlap between the two committees. Discussion ensued. Paul Solomon offered to meet informally to assist in the resolution of this issue.

Tim Higgins provided an update on the Community Planning Process. The Planning Board is currently working on the Goals and Objectives to guide the project. Public participation has been fairly good and OCD is making all efforts to involve residents and Town Meeting members in this important planning process. Overall he is pleased with the progress to date. The Planning Board is meeting every other week to complete the work. Questions and recommendations from the Committee included:

- Employ the larger picture in the presentations; build the case as to how vision can be addressed via the proposed changes. Note positive community-wide impacts and results.
- Try to clearly illustrate any additional revenue stream the implementation of the plan will create
- What role is the V-21 Committee to play in the study now? If Any?

There was a discussion on the Annual Report of the Committee and how it can be employed to help frame the planning process. The Committee is the “keeper of the vision” as it is responsible to implement it.

Discussion centered on how the V-21 Committee can provide assistances to the Community Development Planning process (re: The Corridor Study). The Final Report should identify the entity responsible for the implementation of its recommendations. A lengthy discussion took place on the role V-21 can play in presenting issues to Town Meeting members in a comprehensive manner. It was suggested that all of the options considered should be presented to Town Meeting, not just one option to be voted up or down.

Tim Higgins also informed the Committee that changes in permitting process are beginning. Office of Community Development staff is meeting next week on this and he had already initiated work.

Correspondence from Jim Graves was received. It complimented the Committee on its report. It will be discussed next meeting.

The draft of the goals and objectives from the Planning Board meeting on the Community Development Planning process were discussed. Should the V-21 Committee weigh in on them? Many issues brought up through this planning process by the Planning Board are in the Vision statement. Jennifer Page will draft a commentary and forward it to members for response.

Jennifer Page has invited volunteers from the Newcomers Group to the April 3rd V-21 meeting for an orientation session. She asked that the members be prepared to offer ideas and suggestions to that group (10 members).

Paul Solomon noted that he was motivated by a recent environmental success in Arlington and sent out an e-mail out on it soliciting comments. He would like to see an environmental initiative in Belmont. Could this be another working group?

Jennifer Page has begun putting thoughts together on a report to the Annual Town Meeting. There are many items to report on.

Martin Greco has not been able to attend meetings due to weather problems in the U.S. (he is an insurance claims manager). He will be unable to attend VIC meetings for the next several months. He has requested a leave of absence until June 1. If this is granted, the quorum figure can be reduced until he is back. Jennifer will consult with Will Brownsberger about this proposal and, if Mr. Brownsberger has no objection, will notify Martin that his request has been approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Secretary pro-team,
Timothy Higgins